

THIRD EDITION



HISTORICAL DICTIONARY OF

GABON

DAVID E. GARDINIER
DOUGLAS A. YATES

89. *Egypt*, 3rd ed., by Arthur Goldschmidt Jr. and Robert Johnston. 2003.
90. *Lesotho*, by Scott Rosenberg, Richard Weisfelder, and Michelle Frisbie-Fulton. 2004.
91. *Ethiopia, New Edition*, by David H. Shinn and Thomas P. Ofcansky. 2004.
92. *Angola, New Edition*, by W. Martin James. 2004.
93. *Central African Republic*, 3rd ed., by Pierre Kalck, translated by Xavier-Samuel Kalck. 2005.
94. *Guinea*, 4th ed., by Thomas O'Toole with Janice E. Baker. 2005.
95. *Morocco*, 2nd ed., by Thomas K. Park and Aomar Boum. 2006.
96. *Western Sahara*, 3rd ed., by Anthony G. Pazzanita. 2005.
97. *Ghana*, 3rd ed., by David Owusu-Ansah. 2005.
98. *Madagascar*, 2nd ed., by Philip M. Allen and Maureen Covell. 2005.
99. *Sierra Leone, New Edition*, by C. Magbaily Fyle. 2005.
100. *Libya* Fourth Edition, by Ronald Bruce St John, 2006.
101. *Gabon*, Third Edition, by David E. Gardinier and Douglas A. Yates, 2006.
102. *Algeria*, Third Edition, by Phillip Naylor, 2006.

Historical Dictionary of Gabon

Third Edition

David E. Gardinier
Douglas A. Yates

Historical Dictionaries of Africa, No. 101



The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
Lanham, Maryland • Toronto • Plymouth, UK
2006

SCARECROW PRESS, INC.

Published in the United States of America
by Scarecrow Press, Inc.

A wholly owned subsidiary of

The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.

4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706

www.scarecrowpress.com

Estover Road
Plymouth PL6 7PY
United Kingdom

Copyright © 2006 by David E. Gardinier and Douglas A. Yates

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored
in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic,
mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission
of the publisher.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Gardinier, David E.

Historical dictionary of Gabon / David E. Gardinier, Douglas A. Yates. —
3rd ed.

p. cm. — (Historical dictionaries of Africa ; no. 101)

Includes bibliographical references.

ISBN-13: 978-0-8108-4918-1 (hardcover : alk. paper)

ISBN-10: 0-8108-4918-6 (hardcover : alk. paper)

1. Gabon—History—Dictionaries. I. Yates, Douglas Andrew. II. Title. III.
Series.

DT546.15.G37 2006
967.21003—dc22

2006011557

©TM The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of
American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper
for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.
Manufactured in the United States of America.

DT
346.15

G37
2006

967.2100321

G168h

2006

785
Afri/AfrAm Ref.

Contents

To Ken and Annemarie;
and to Corentine, Oliver, Josephine, and Nicolas

Table of Maps and Tables	xv
Author's Foreword	xvii
Abbreviations	xviii
Index	xix
Chronology	xxix
Introduction	1
THE DICTIONARY	
Appendices	
A. French Governors and Governors-General	347
B. Presidents and Prime Ministers	351
C. Roman Catholic Bishops	353
D. Saints	355
Bibliography	361
About the Authors	455

Contents

List of Maps and Tables	xi
Editor's Foreword <i>Jon Woronoff</i>	xiii
Acknowledgments	xv
Reader's Note	xvii
Acronyms and Abbreviations	xix
Maps	xxv
Chronology	xxix
Introduction	xli
THE DICTIONARY	1
Appendixes	
A French Governors and Governors-General	347
B Presidents and Prime Ministers	351
C Roman Catholic Bishops	353
D Statistics	355
Bibliography	361
About the Authors	455

Maps and Tables

MAPS

Peoples of Gabon	xxv
Key: Physical Map of Gabon	xxvi
Physical Map of Gabon	xxvii
Political Map of Gabon	xxviii

TABLES

National Budgets, 1960–2003	355
Value of Exports and Imports, 1960–2003	356
Production of Fuels, Minerals, and Wood, 1960–2003	357
Area and Population of the Nine Provinces	359

Bibliography

CONTENTS

I. Introduction	362
II. General Works and Sources	366
A. General Works	369
B. Guide Books	369
C. Continuing Sources	370
D. Reference Works	371
E. Bibliographies and Guides to Sources	374
F. Atlases and Maps	375
III. Archaeology and Prehistory	
IV. Early Accounts and Exploration Accounts (before 1914)	379
V. History	381
A. General	385
B. Precolonial Period	386
C. Colonial Period	394
D. Postindependence Period	395
VI. Government	395
A. Politics	401
B. Administration and Law	404
C. Foreign Relations	410
D. Military Affairs	411
VII. Economy	411
A. General	412
B. Agriculture and Fishing	413
C. Forestry	414
D. Mining	415
E. Finance	

VIII. Society	415
A. Anthropology and Sociology	415
B. Education	422
C. Religion and Missions	424
IX. Sciences	429
A. Geography and Demography	429
B. Physical and Natural Sciences	434
C. Public Health and Medicine	438
X. Arts	440
A. Literature	440
B. Language	446
C. Art and Architecture	450
D. Music and Dance	452

I. INTRODUCTION

Students of contemporary affairs should start with the chapters on Gabon in *Africa Contemporary Record*, which since 1989 have been written by David Gardinier; these essays contain summaries of the most important political, military, social, and economic developments as well as external relations. The annually updated sections in *Africa South of the Sahara* provide less information but greater perspective, particularly on economics. Especially valuable for detailed current news is the Agence France Presse's daily *Bulletin Quotidien d'Afrique*, which contains dispatches from both Libreville and Paris. The best press summaries are found in the monthly *Africa Research Bulletin*, which has both a political and an economic series. Detailed political and economic news with analyses is found in the quarterly Economist Intelligence Unit's *Gabon, Equatorial Guinea Country Report*. The weekly *Marchés Tropicaux et Méditerranéens* has brief news items, mainly on economic matters, and ordinarily a long, detailed interpretive article on Gabon annually. The weekly *Bulletin d'Afrique Noire* presents detailed statistical data and analyses on the Gabon economy. Since the late 1990s the same publisher has published the weekly *Gabon-Sélection*; it includes even greater coverage of economic and financial matters while supplying more information on international business and diplomatic relations. Several times a year the French Embassy in Libreville publishes very

detailed and comprehensive reports on various dimensions of the economy in the series *Missions Économiques. Fiche de Synthèse*.

Continuing bibliographical sources for books, articles, and chapters in collective works include two quarterlies, *International African Bibliography* and *Current Bibliography of African Affairs*, as well as the annual *Africa Bibliography*. From 1959 to 2003 the Paris quarterly *Afrique Contemporaine* listed new books published on Gabon along with brief descriptions. It has continued to publish a chronology of events. Readers should consult the catalogues of three publishers, L'Harmattan and Karthala in Paris and Éditions Raponda-Walker in Libreville, which collectively publish a large portion of the new books on Gabon. The *African Book Publishing Record* is also a useful source for new works on Gabon. *Mondes et Cultures*, *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, and *Afrique Politique* review many of the new books on Gabon and equatorial Central Africa. The quarterly *African Studies Abstracts* contains well-prepared and helpful summaries. The quarterly *Africa News* lists master's theses and doctoral dissertations completed in U.S. and Canadian universities. An annotated bibliography, *Gabon*, by David Gardinier, provides descriptions or summaries of the contents of the most important works on Gabon past and present published in English or French through 1991.

The best introduction to Gabon and its history in English is the work of James Barnes, *Beyond the Colonial Legacy*. The best one in French is François Gaulme, *Le Gabon et Son Ombre*, whose study outlines and interprets the main historical periods while including economic trends and foreign relations during the first two decades of the Bongo era. In addition, an excellent two-volume study by Roland Pourtier, *Le Gabon*, provides a detailed introduction to the geography, demography, and economy from a historical perspective. Compensating for the lack of a single historical work that includes the 1990s and 2000s is the collective work edited in 2003 by Michael Reed and James Barnes, *Culture, Ecology, and Politics in Gabon's Rainforest*; it contains detailed chapters on the petroleum-dominated economy, forestry and other related environmental issues, agriculture, bushmeat, and health care, among other issues, from a historical perspective. Earlier Rita Headrick, in *Colonialism, Health & Illness in French Equatorial Africa, 1885-1935*, studied the impact of the colonial rule on health and illness in all of French Equatorial Africa. The dissertation by Jeremy Rich, "Eating Disorders," concerns the history of food consumption and supply in colonial Libreville.

Since the 1990s three important works have been published on the prehistory of Gabon: Bernard Clist's *Gabon: 100,000 ans d'histoire*, about archaeology; Jan Vansina's *Paths in the Rainforests*, about the political tradition of the peoples of equatorial West Central Africa; and Kairn Klieman's *The Pygmies Were Our Compass*, about the Pygmies and their relations with the Bantu groups.

The most comprehensive works on the peoples of Gabon, including their history, are those by André Raponda Walker, *Notes d'histoire du Gabon*, and Hubert Deschamps, *Quinze Ans du Gabon and Traditions orales et archives de Gabon*. François Gaulme, *La terre des Bramas*, has studied the impact of Europeans along the Atlantic coast on the formation of Gabonese and neighboring societies, including the Congolese and the Duala, from the 15th to the 18th centuries. Robert Garfield, *A History of São Tomé Island 1470–1655*, reviews the early history of Gabon's insular neighbor, including its contacts with Gabon. Marcel Soret, *Histoire du Congo: Capitale Brazzaville*, treats the peoples of the south and southeast who also inhabit the Congo Republic. Christopher Gray, *Colonial Rule and Crisis in Equatorial Africa: Southern Gabon c. 1880–1940*, deals with the evolution of several peoples of southern Gabon under colonial rule. Studies by K. David Patterson, *The Northern Gabon Coast to 1875*; Henry Bucher, *The Mpongwe of the Estuary: A History to 1860*; and Elikia M'Bokolo, *Noirs et Blancs en Afrique Equatoriale: Les sociétés côtières et la pénétration française (vers 1820–1874)*, ably treat the history of the northern coastal regions through 1875. Phyllis Martin, *The External Trade of the Loango Coast, 1576–1870*, includes the portion of the southern coast that was under the sway of Loango through 1870. François Gaulme, *Le pays de Cama*, analyzes the evolution of Nkomi society through the 19th century. Joseph Ambouroué-Avaro, *Un peuple gabonais à l'aube de la colonisation*, studies the peoples of the lower Ogooué during the 19th century. Other works on individual peoples, which include the impact of colonial rule, are those on the Fang by Georges Balandier, *Sociologie actuelle de l'Afrique*; James Fernandez, *Redistributive Acculturation and Ritual Reintegration in Fang Culture*; and John Cinnamon, *The Long March of the Fang*; those on the Bakèlè by François Ngolet, *La Dispersion Ongom en Afrique Centrale*; and those on the Bakota by Louis Perrois, "Chronique du Pays Kota." Ange Ratanga Atoz, *Les Résistances Gabonaises à l'Imperialisme de 1870 à 1914*, and Nicolas

Métégué N'Nah, *L'implantation coloniale au Gabon*, have dealt with the resistance of Gabon's peoples to the establishment of French colonial rule through 1914. Michael Reed, *An Ethno-Historical Study of the Political Economy of Ndjole, Gabon*, treats the period since 1800. A chapter by Ralph Austen and Rita Headrick, "Equatorial Africa under Colonial Rule," includes the French impact on Gabon during the 20th century.

Helpful for understanding political developments from World War II through the end of the Mba period are works by Florence Bernault, *Démocraties Ambigües en Afrique Centrale, Congo-Brazzaville, Gabon: 1940–1965*; John Ballard, *The Development of Political Parties in French Equatorial Africa*; Brian Weinstein, *Gabon: Nation-Building on the Ogooué*, and Charles Darlington and Alice Darlington, *African Betrayal*. A long article by Michael Reed concentrates on the involvement of France and Frenchmen from independence through 1985. Indispensable for the politics of the Bongo era are articles by N'Dong Obiang, "Le Parti Démocratique Gabonais et l'État" and François Hervouet, "Le Processus de Concentration des Pouvoirs par le Président de la République." Useful for both the politics and the economics of the period 1945–1958 are chapters in the survey by Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *The Emerging States of French Equatorial Africa*.

The era of failed democratization since 1990 has been the subject of a book by Tim Auracher, *Le Gabon: une démocratie bloquée*, as well as chapters or essays by Samuel Decalo, "Gabon under the Shadow of Big Brother"; David Gardinier, "Gabon: Limited Reform and Regime Survival"; and James Barnes, "The Bongo Phenomenon: Power in Gabon." François Ngolet, "Ideological Manipulations and Political Longevity: The Power of Omar Bongo in Gabon Since 1967," analyzes President Bongo's manipulations of political symbols to bolster his regime. Douglas Yates, *The Rentier State in Africa: Oil-Rent Dependency and Neocolonialism in the Republic of Gabon*, deals with the creation of a Gabonese state financed by oil revenues and the patronage-based political regime that was created under President Bongo. Guy Rossatanga-Rignault composed a history and political analysis of the state as well as six articles on politics, mainly since the 1990s; they are listed in the Politics subsection of the bibliography. Detailed biographies of politicians are found in Isabelle Verdier, *Cent Hommes au Gabon*, and in an article in *Jeune Afrique*, January, 5–11, 2003.

John F. Clark's "Foreign Policy Making in Central Africa" presents Gabon's foreign policy since the 1990s, including its relations with its Central African neighbors. Douglas Yates, "Central Africa: Oil and the Franco-American Rivalry" includes international competition for equatorial Central African petroleum resources. David Gardinier has written articles on Gabon's relations with France between 1960 and 2000: "France and Gabon Since 1960," "France and Gabon in the Mitterrand Presidency," and "France and Gabon Since 1993: The Reshaping of a Neo-Colonial Relationship."

Six articles by David Gardinier, listed in the Education subsection of the bibliography, introduce educational developments since independence as well as the history of Western education since 1842. Six articles by David Gardinier and one by Penelope Campbell, listed in the Religion and Missions subsection of the bibliography, discuss Christian missionary activities during the 19th century. The best older work on Catholic evangelization is that of Alexandre LeRoy, "Missions d'Afrique: le Congo Français, le Gabon." André Raponda Walker and Roger Sillans, in *Rites et Croyances des Peuples du Gabon*, treat the traditional religions and beliefs of Gabon's peoples. The numerous publications by James Fernandez and Stanislaw Swiderski on the syncretistic indigenous religion, Bwiti, are listed in the Religion and Missions subsection of the bibliography.

Scope of the Bibliography

The bibliography includes the 1,400 or so books, articles, chapters, reports, and theses most useful for understanding Gabon and its history, primarily those published since 1980. It includes some older works where no recent ones on the subject are available. Several hundred additional works published prior to 1990 may be consulted in the second edition of this book. Nearly all publications on Gabon are in French or English, and most of the rest are in Spanish or German.

II. GENERAL WORKS AND SOURCES

A. General Works

- Aicardi de Saint-Paul, Marc. *Le Gabon: Du Roi Denis à Omar Bongo*. Paris: Albatross, n.d. 183 pp. Translated: *Gabon: The Development of a Nation*. New York: Routledge, 1989. 145 pp.

- Ayouné, Jean-Rémy. "Occidentalisme et Africanisme." *Renaissances* (Brazzaville) (October 1944).
- . "Points de vue d'intellectuels d'Afrique centrale." *Renaissances* (Brazzaville) (October 1944).
- . "Valeurs et christianisme." *La Semaine de l'Afrique Équatoriale Française* (Brazzaville) (January 29, 1955); (February 5, 1955); (February 19, 1955).
- Barnes, James F. *Gabon: Beyond the Colonial Legacy*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1992. 135 pp.
- Berger, Iris, and E. Frances White. *Women in Sub-Saharan Africa: Restoring Women to History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. 169 pp.
- Binet, Jacques. "La République gabonaise." *Notes et Études Documentaires* no. 3703 (June 27, 1970): 1-36.
- Bollig, M., and D. Bünnagel, eds. *Der Zentralafrikanische Regenwald: Ökologie, Geschichte, Gesellschaft, Wirtschaft*. Münster, Germany: Lit, 1992. 231 pp.
- Borella, François. *L'évolution politique et juridique de l'Union française depuis 1946*. Paris: R. Pichon and R. Durand-Auzias, 1958. 499 pp.
- Bouche, Denise. *Histoire de la colonisation française*. Vol. 2, *Flux et reflux (1815-1962)*. Paris: Fayard, 1991. 607 pp.
- Broc, Numa. "Les explorateurs français du XIXe siècle reconsidérés." *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 69, no. 3 (1982): 237-74; no. 4 (1982): 323-59.
- Brokken, Jan. *The Rainbird: A Central African Journey*. Melbourne, Australia: Lonely Planet, 1997. 288 pp.
- Brownlie, Ian. *African Boundaries. A Legal and Diplomatic Encyclopedia*. London: C. Hurst, 1979. 1,355 pp. (texts).
- Centre d'Étude d'Afrique Noire. *L'Année politique: 1998: Femmes d'Afrique*. Paris: Karthala, 1998. 274 pp.
- Chafer, Tony, and Amanda Sachur, eds. *French Colonial Empire and the Popular Front: Hope and Disillusionment*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999.
- Cinnamon, John M. "Gabon." In *Encyclopedia of Africa South of the Sahara*, ed. John Middleton. Vol. 2, 179-85. New York: Scribner, 1997.
- Coquery-Vidrovitch, Catherine. *African Women: A Modern History*. Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1997. 318 pp.
- Corbett, Edward M. *The French Presence in Black Africa*. Washington, D.C.: Black Orpheus Press, 1972. 209 pp.
- Daget, Serge. *Répertoire des expéditions françaises à la traite illégale (1814-1850)*. Nantes: Centre de Recherche sur l'Histoire du Monde Atlantique. Comité Nantais en Sciences Humaines, 1988. 603 pp.
- Decraene, Philippe. "Gabon 1968." *Comptes Rendus Trimestriels des Séances de l'Académie des Sciences d'Outre-Mer* 28 (June 1968): 297-312.